

House Human Services Committee
Testimony of Donna Kreuzer
In support of House Bill 133
March 23, 2021

Chairman Frank and Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Donna Kreuzer, I live in Austin, Texas. I am here in support of HB 133. I am an active Advocate for Maternal Mental Health and Wellness, a member of the Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition, the Texas Suicide Prevention Council, a past Board Member of Pregnancy and Postpartum Health Alliance of TX (PPHATX) and the current Advisor of Legislative Affairs for PPHATX.

Really though, why am I here today? I'm here for the same reasons I was at the Capitol for the 2017 and 2019 Legislative Sessions. I'm here in support of past and present bills proposed to improve the continuity of care for Medicaid Postpartum women, to help reduce instances of maternal death, to improve health for TX mothers and babies at their most vulnerable and critical times of life, to support healthier subsequent pregnancies, and to reduce Medicaid costs to our great state of Texas! HB 133 will provide all of the aforementioned by allowing new moms to have Medicaid for up to 12 months after pregnancy versus 2 months.

Even more importantly, I am here today because getting HB 133 passed is PERSONAL for me. Tragically and sadly, my only child, my beautiful Kristi, became one of the 1 in 6 Texas Mothers who suffered from PPD after her first delivery. Kristi struggled with Severe PPD for 6 months after the long-anticipated birth of her only child. 3,824 days ago, on October 1, 2010, we lost our only, deeply cherished child to SUICIDE - a tragic complication of untreated or under-treated PPD - and one of the top causes of maternal death according to the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee. There are NO WORDS to describe how devastated a parent feels from losing their own flesh and blood.

It took many grueling years and extensive fertility assistance for Kristi and her husband to finally become parents. She never gave up despite the terrific stress and high financial expenses incurred. Kristi was always a fighter when it meant

something of importance to her. She always fought for the "underdog", the marginalized populations, those who could not help themselves and those less fortunate than she. My amazing daughter was an intelligent and gifted young lady, she excelled through her 3 degrees and garnered many accolades/honors throughout her lifetime and work experiences. But the Severe Postpartum Depression was relentless and left her without HOPE of recovery to her beautiful, vivacious, loving, caring and giving personality. Towards the end of her long, excruciating battle, Kristi mentioned repeatedly that she was "VACANT inside, void of any feelings or emotions".....

Our precious Kristi began suffering with the debilitating Severe PPD on day 3 of her adorable and healthy daughter's life....Kristi fought valiantly for 6 months. Fortunately, we had the resources, a strong network and time BEYOND 2 MONTHS to provide all the help we could possibly get for our precious daughter. But, I realize, without HOPE, it's difficult to survive ANYTHING IN LIFE. I shudder to think of what DOES/MIGHT HAPPEN to the Medicaid Moms who only have 60 days postpartum health insurance. And this is again WHY it's extremely important for me to be here today....in honor and memory of my incredible Kristi, for had she survived the evil tortures of Severe PPD, she would most definitely be working "circles" around her Mom on this all-important issue!

Speaking of circles, and in closing, I strongly urge you to please consider passing this important bill so that COUNTLESS Texas Postpartum Moms will be equipped with a full year of insurance enabling them to continue THEIR healthy, happy "circles of life"--something every woman truly deserves....

I thank you again for the privilege and opportunity to provide testimony in full support of Representative Rose's HB 133!

Sincerely and hopefully,

Donna Kreuzer
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